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Chairman: Mr. Özügergin (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Turkey)

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In the absence of Mr. Asadi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Özügergin (Turkey), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda Item 93: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*) (A/53/60, A/53/62, A/53/63–S/1998/100, A/53/69, A/53/72–S/1998/156, A/53/95–S/1998/311, A/53/96, A/53/124, A/53/155, A/53/168, A/53/204, A/53/296, A/53/371–S/1998/848, A/53/374, A/53/396, A/53/411, A/53/412, A/53/414, A/53/416, A/53/453)

(c) Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (*continued*) (A/53/267, A/53/512; A/C.2/53/L.19)

(f) Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (*continued*) (A/53/407)

1. **Mr. Töpfer** (Executive Director of UNEP and Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) said that the Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) had recently been suffering from a lack of organizational coherence which had led to a decrease in the impact of its work. Several studies and recommendations had underlined the need for a set of clear and well-defined corporate policies and a more focused post-Habitat II programme. The report of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements had also emphasized that it was necessary to stabilize an independent Habitat Centre in Nairobi, making full use of the synergy with UNEP and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and to concentrate on the core programme structure and normative function of the Centre. He hoped that the Task Force report could be discussed during the current session of the General Assembly.

2. His objective was for Habitat to have a unique identity and separate organizational structure. Habitat would have its greatest impact by focusing on the local level. It would establish its local contacts with the support of national Governments, and its impact would be maximized through the establishment of strategic partnerships with local authorities and also with partners in the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, especially the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

3. Following his appointment as Acting Executive Director a decision had been taken to establish a revitalization group at the Habitat Centre; he expressed gratitude to those Governments which had provided the resources, especially those of the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The revitalization group had submitted three reports, which should be distributed to members of the Committee. The main recommendations were contained in the second report, on management and administrative matters.

4. The first of the three recommendations was to establish a planning and coordination office with clear terms of reference and reporting directly to the Executive Director. It was needed very urgently so that the budget for the next biennium could be prepared, and the office would be operational by the beginning of November 1998.

5. The second recommendation was to assign responsibility for the technical preparation and monitoring of the implementation of the Habitat budget to the United Nations Office at Nairobi, with corresponding savings from the reduction in the workload in the Centre for Human Settlements.

6. The third recommendation was to establish a resource mobilization office also with clear terms of reference and reporting directly to the Executive Director of Habitat.

7. The revitalization group would establish a strategic vision for Habitat and the area in which its work would be focused. A clear and constructive Habitat Centre was very urgently needed for the world was facing massive demographic shifts: in the next 30 years the global urbanized population would double, and the least urbanized continent, Africa, would have up to 70 per cent of its population in cities by the year 2020. Many Governments were unprepared and under-resourced for such a phenomenon, which was likely greatly to exacerbate the existing urban crisis. It would take concentrated effort to solve such problems, and Habitat could not perform that task alone. It was essential to prepare for the urbanization processes, rather than simply reacting to them afterwards. Urban crime and violence were increasing rapidly, due to poverty, unemployment, social tensions of various kinds and the fact that the urban young felt they had no future. The problems were complex and could only be addressed in partnership with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and especially women's groups on matters relating to housing and urban development. There must be a new culture of cooperation with local authorities.

8. **Mr. Al-Shamasi** (United Arab Emirates) said that despite the positive outcome of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements (Habitat I and II), an estimated 1 billion people were still suffering the effects of poverty, displacement, unemployment, environmental

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degradation and the breakdown of society, and had no adequate shelter, a situation which contributed to the rise in violence, illegal drug trafficking, terrorism and other ills. The underlying causes of such problems must be dealt with at national level, with regional and international cooperation. He urged donor States and the financial institutions to increase development assistance to developing countries and to review debt schedules.

9. Developed and developing countries alike were witnessing a large rural exodus. Development plans must not focus solely on major cities, but ensure that the needs of citizens in all regions were met.

10. His delegation was concerned at the growing numbers of people subjected to forcible internal or external displacement as a result of civil strife or foreign occupation. Large numbers of Palestinians and other Arabs had been displaced during the successive stages of Israeli occupation, and other peoples in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Africa had suffered the same fate. It was important to increase endeavours to find an appropriate mechanism to deal with the underlying causes of such displacement and to facilitate return to the original homeland. He urged the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli Government to halt forthwith its policy of expropriating land and demolishing homes in order to replace them with illegal Jewish settlements, in violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Palestinian refugees must return to their homes and be allowed to enjoy their inalienable right to self-determination.

11. His country, under the guidance of its head of State, had promulgated legislation to incorporate environmental issues into the national development process and to improve economic and social aspects of its inhabitants' lives. A number of major projects had provided satisfactory housing for all, and rural development projects had ensured that all parts of the country received basic services.

12. His country provided emergency and development assistance to a number of developing countries and carried out a number of development projects, such as the building of housing units in the city of Jerusalem. A firm believer in the concept of increased dialogue and participation and the division of responsibilities between States, his country had swiftly ratified a number of United Nations conventions relating to the environment, and made an effective contribution to bilateral, regional and international activities in the field. An example of its cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was its annual presentation of the Dubai Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

13. His delegation supported the proposals calling for the strengthening of the role of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Economic and Social Council, in policy development and evaluation and in implementation and follow-up to Habitat II, with a view to improving living conditions for millions of people all over the world.

14. **Ms. Odinga** (Kenya) said that the need for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was as great today as when it had been established, for the problem of human settlements required greater attention than ever before. Full and effective implementation of the Habitat Agenda would require the strengthening of the Centre. Her delegation looked forward to fruitful discussions under item 30 on the Secretary-General's report on the recommendations of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements.

15. There was a need to increase financial latitude while maintaining transparency, and in that exercise the aim should be to consolidate the Centre rather than weaken it. The views of Member States should be taken into account and the role of donors and recipients defined and appreciated. There was a need fully to take into account resolutions 16/8, 16/19, 16/28 and 16/29 of the Commission on Human Settlements for, if implemented, they would largely resolve the Centre's administrative and management problems. It should be reorganized in a transparent manner so that its focus on developments regarding human settlements would not be affected to the point where it was rendered incapable of properly coordinating implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

16. Kenya supported the Habitat II process and welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/53/267). Both the preparatory process and the special session itself were vital as means of sharing experiences among partners and identifying the bottlenecks and the mechanisms for dealing with them. The special session would also review the monitoring tools, and in that regard the central role of the Commission on Human Settlements and its secretariat in guiding the process could not be overemphasized.

17. **Ms. Khan-Cummings** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that in keeping with the enabling strategy based on partnership, participation and decentralization adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Trinidad and Tobago had developed a number of initiatives for implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and had made progress in achieving the twin goals of sustainable

development of human settlements and provision of adequate shelter for its citizens. As part of its overall strategy to alleviate poverty, her Government had developed a range of housing options such as low- interest loans and the provision of free technical advice to assist in home construction. To meet the goal of sustainable human settlements, a growth poll strategy had been developed which was aimed at reducing the rural-urban drift. Emphasis was being placed on the establishment of urban-type growth centres in the rural and undeveloped areas of the country.

18. As part of the Government's efforts to achieve increased citizen participation in community improvement, a national commission had been established under the auspices of the Ministry of Social and Community Development with projects ranging from the physical infrastructure (water, roads and electricity) to the social infrastructure (places of worship and buildings for community and cultural activities). Policies had also been adopted to achieve gender equality in the planning of human settlements, and innovative mechanisms had been provided for the financing of such settlements. Trinidad and Tobago had also increased its cooperation at the regional level, providing technical assistance and expertise in formulating and implementing human settlement programmes in a number of Caribbean countries.

19. The special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda would have the particular focus of assessing the legal, administrative and financial and human resource constraints in carrying out national plans of action; that focus would be useful in furthering the goals established at Habitat II. It was crucial that consideration of the issue of new and additional financial resources should bear fruit in order fully to implement the Habitat Agenda; that was urgently needed to assist efforts at national and regional levels to achieve adequate shelter for all.

20. There was a need for effective information, education and communication strategies concerning the links between population, environment and sustainable development; that was particularly so for small island States, a large percentage of whose populations lived on coastal zones and in urban areas. Such issues were receiving attention in the overall national planning strategies of Trinidad and Tobago. The country's Population Council was in the final stages of drawing up a plan of action for the implementation of a national population policy. That policy established explicit demographic goals. Quantitative targets had been suggested for population growth and size, fertility, mortality and migration. Both governmental and non-governmental agencies were critical to implementation of the goals of the national policy because of the multifaceted and multisectoral nature of population issues. The Population Council would have a significant coordinating and monitoring role.

21. Trinidad and Tobago had always been committed to the goals established at the International Conference on Population and Development, and would continue to work closely with regional and international organizations in meeting the Conference's goals. However, to do so, adequate financial resources had to be allocated. Her country thanked the international community for the efforts made so far, and looked forward to increased cooperation in fulfilment of the agenda of Habitat II.

22. **Mr. Yahya** (Singapore) said that unprecedented rapid urbanization and the emergence of megacities were taxing city infrastructures, particularly in developing countries. Sustainable urban development, particularly sustainable human development, was a key factor in Singapore's national development policy. Through forward-looking and integrated land-use planning, it was able to satisfy the housing, recreational and industrial needs of its citizens while safeguarding the environment. Other measures had included substantial investments in infrastructure for the collection, treatment and disposal of wastes and the adoption and enforcement of pollution control laws that were in line with generally accepted international standards.

23. Singapore, which firmly believed in the importance of international cooperation for meeting common environmental challenges, had launched a global environmental initiative on sustainable development following the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly. Within the context of the initiative – a four-nation partnership with Brazil, Germany and South Africa – Singapore would be hosting a world conference on model cities in April 1999.

24. Noting the potential for global warming to threaten low-lying islands and other regions, he said that the developed countries should take the lead in the quest to reduce global warming. He urged them to honour the pledges they had undertaken in Berlin with regard to greenhouse gas emissions and the provision of financial and technological assistance to developing countries.

25. **Mr. Nishigahiro** (Japan) said that the promotion of reproductive health and the empowerment of women – two major themes addressed at the International Conference on Population and Development – were of primary importance to Japan. Japanese public health institutions provided women with health education services and opportunities to consult with experts on health-related issues, including contraception, pregnancy, infertility and sexually transmitted

diseases. In order to promote the participation of civil society, another theme stressed at the Cairo Conference, Japan had organized an Open Forum in Tokyo earlier in the year to review the implementation of a Japanese initiative in the area of population and AIDS. On that occasion, the need for collaboration by the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations had been stressed. A number of funds in Japan facilitated the activities of non-governmental organizations, and further legislation to assist non-profit organizations had recently been adopted. Japan had long been the largest contributor to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). At the bilateral level, it had launched projects such as the Global Issues Initiative on Population and AIDS, whose successes included the near-eradication of polio in the western Pacific region (China, the Philippines and Viet Nam).

26. His delegation noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (A/53/407). It welcomed the outcomes of the regional and technical meetings held as part of the preparatory process and system-wide involvement in that process through inter-agency meetings and the meeting of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). The final document of the special session should be prepared well in advance. In that context, his delegation appreciated the Secretariat's consultations with Member States, which it hoped would provide a sound basis for the deliberations of the special session. The Secretary-General's report should present a practical scheme for the further implementation of the Programme of Action that fully took into account the experiences and lessons discussed during the preparatory process. His delegation also welcomed the Secretariat's initiatives concerning the participation of non-governmental organizations.

27. Japan continued to focus on three elements it had stressed at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II): human resources development, protection of the environment and of socially vulnerable groups and grass-roots activities. It had pursued a partnership with developing countries through cooperation in such areas as comprehensive regional development planning, urban planning, urban hygiene and urban transportation. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on proposals on the scope, and organizational aspects of the special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/53/267), he called for close communication between the parties concerned in Nairobi and New York during the preparatory process. Since the special session would not be included in the agenda of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1999, a review of the timetable for the preparatory process was crucial.

28. **Ms. Ruhl-Barzi** (Observer for Switzerland) said that Switzerland attached great importance to the five-year review of the Cairo Programme of Action and would play an active role in the preparations for the special session in 1999. The consensus achieved in 1994 must form the basis for the deliberations of the special session on future population strategies. Inspired by the people-centred approach of the Cairo Conference, Switzerland had developed a more integrated population policy which stressed issues important to civil society, such as equality between men and women, the integration of aliens, the struggle against racism and ethical aspects of advanced medical techniques; included a more comprehensive health and international migration component; and placed greater emphasis on the ecological and demographic impact of production and consumption patterns.

29. In connection with the preparations for the five-year review, Switzerland had conducted its own five-year evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of Action, both at the national level and in the sphere of international cooperation for development. The report would be published on time for the regional consultation of the Economic Commission for Europe, to be held in Budapest. Switzerland also planned to organize an exhibit entitled "Six billion human beings" in 1999. Switzerland's total contribution to population activities, including to UNFPA and to international non-governmental organizations, had increased from 11 million to 18 million Swiss francs. In conclusion, she wished to confirm that Switzerland would increase its contribution to UNFPA by 10 per cent, representing an amount of 11 million Swiss francs.

30. **Ms. Baholisolo** (Madagascar) said that the economic crisis, characterized by financial insecurity, shortage of affordable housing and social disintegration, made it particularly urgent to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Conferences on Human Settlements. In keeping with the recommendations of Habitat II on national responsibility, her Government had made decent housing the centrepiece of its social programme. The government housing policy, with the participation of the private sector, was aimed at creating 35,000 housing units annually through sustainable land development, the establishment of a land data bank and loan mechanisms. A separate land

development policy was based on support for migration, the creation of new rural-type towns and the decentralization of the Malagasy economic authorities.

31. As part of its follow-up to Habitat II, her Government had formed a partnership for housing construction with national and foreign private investors, with input from the ultimate beneficiaries. Through unions and non-governmental organizations, professionals participated in the housing programme by providing assistance to the most deprived groups. The attainment of the objectives of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 would require increased international cooperation and synergy among the various bodies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. An exchange of experiences concerning housing and urban development technology, particularly within the context of South-South cooperation, would be equally crucial. In conclusion, her delegation hoped that the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would give impetus to the dialogue on sustainable human settlements.

32. **Mr. Reva** (Ukraine) said that his delegation welcomed the increased cooperation among various United Nations bodies, Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. In Ukraine, the main population issues were the return of formerly deported persons to their historical homeland, transit migration and the high mortality rate, particularly among the male population. The Ukrainian people were still suffering from health problems in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. The most recent statistical data showed a substantial increase in child mortality; more than 1,000 Ukrainian children had been diagnosed with thyroid gland cancer.

33. In view of the specific population problems of the countries with economies in transition, UNFPA activities in Central and Eastern Europe should be expanded through the implementation of concrete regional projects. His delegation believed that the Commission on Population and Development should continue to play a leading role in monitoring, reviewing and assessing the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. Reliable statistical data obtained from population censuses would be a key factor in the five-year review. His delegation therefore attached particular importance to the resolution on censuses adopted by the Commission at its thirty-first session.

34. The recommendations of the session of the Economic and Social Council on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits, held in May, should be fully taken into account in the preparatory process for both the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and the special session of the General Assembly on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The final documents of those sessions should address elements identified in the resolutions of the Economic and Social Council, including cross-cutting issues, the Council's coordination and management role and inter-agency and country-level follow-up. In conclusion, the Bretton Woods institutions should contemplate extending special lines of credit to finance national housing construction programmes and projects using ecologically sound construction technology.

35. **Mr. Nimac** (Croatia) stressed the need for further cooperation in order to realize the goals outlined in the Cairo Programme of Action and to explore the links between population and the various aspects of sustainable development. His delegation welcomed the unprecedented degree of participation by civil society in the follow-up process to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), as prescribed by General Assembly resolution 52/190 (para. 6) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/267, para. 2). It was also pleased that civil society would play a key role in the preparatory process for the five-year review of the Cairo Conference, particularly at the international forum, to be held in The Hague in February 1999. Croatia urged all countries to respond to requests for information on population and development, as it had done earlier that year, in order to facilitate the global monitoring of implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action.

36. His delegation attached particular importance to the linkages between population changes, including migration and economic and social conditions. During the period of war and occupation (1991–1995), Croatia's population growth had been negative. Despite some improvement in the past three years, that rate remained insufficient to ensure a renewal of the population. In response, his Government had developed a plan for balanced renewal that was consistent with the Programme of Action, particularly principles 3, 4 and 8.

37. Croatia also had to deal with forced migration, including a huge volume of displaced persons and refugees from neighbouring countries which had totalled 400,000 in 1994. The process of return depended largely on the reconstruction and economic revitalization of the war-torn areas. In that connection, his Government had prepared a comprehensive reconstruction plan and, in cooperation with

the international community, had scheduled an international donors' conference in early December.

38. A Croatian expert would be participating in the work of the Commission on Population and Development, which had been designated as the preparatory body for the five-year review of the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. His delegation welcomed the decision to make the next session of the Commission open-ended and looked forward to cooperating with other delegations in the preparations for the special session.

39. **Mr. Tanasescu** (Romania) said that the lessons drawn from the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action, adopted in Bucharest in 1974, would constitute an important input for the review of the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at Cairo.

40. A comparison of those two documents clearly demonstrated the complexity of population issues, and the need for coordinated and coherent action at all levels.

41. The Programme of Action acknowledged the special needs of countries in transition, especially in the field of reproductive health and family planning. During the four years of its implementation in Romania and in other countries of the region, the importance of international assistance had been brought to the fore. At the same time, new and important topics such as the health of young persons and social integration had been identified. The Commission on Population and Development had recognized the downward trend in some vital indicators in transition economies as a result of the social cost of economic reform. Reduction of life expectancy, negative population growth and a deterioration of the general health status of the population since 1990 had been confirmed by official statistics in Romania and other countries of the region. Romania welcomed the inclusion of regional discussions on the implementation of the Programme of Action as an important input for the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 1999.

42. His delegation also welcomed the Commission's decision on the introduction of a new census cycle at the beginning of the next decade. The data collected during that census would be highly relevant to studies on the social and human impact of the transition period and would provide a comprehensive database on population.

43. While priority should be accorded during the preparatory process to the critical problems of developing countries, especially the least developed, attention should also be given to health and the specific issues affecting older persons and youth, which were relevant to all countries. Finally, his delegation emphasized the need for cooperation and partnership between the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the United Nations Population Fund in preparation for the special session.

44. **Ms. Pierce** (United Nations Population Fund) thanked representatives for their very useful comments and suggestions, noting that their remarks had illustrated the close relationship between population and sustainable development. Population truly linked various aspects and sectoral concerns on the global agenda. In addressing the outcome of all the recent conferences in a coordinated and integrated manner, the United Nations was helping Governments to realize the goals that had been achieved at those important conferences and summits. UNFPA had noted with appreciation the remarks of the Government of Japan, which had been the largest donor to the Fund since the 1980s. It also wished to take note of that country's very strong bilateral programme in the area of population, particularly its global issues initiative pertaining to population and AIDS. UNFPA also acknowledged with great appreciation the decision by the Government of Switzerland to increase its contribution to the Fund's work and looked forward to the country report that Switzerland would present at the upcoming conference in Budapest.

45. **Mr. Chamie** (Director of the Population Division) noted that, according to the 1998 revision of the official United Nations population estimates and projections, while population growth rates were decreasing, the world's population would continue to grow for many decades to come. Of the net addition of 78 million people per year, India's contribution was about 21 per cent, followed by China with 15 per cent. India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia and Nigeria accounted for almost 50 per cent of the world's annual population growth. Also, whereas there were now 10 countries with a population of 100 million or more, by the year 2050 there would be 18 countries in that category. Differential rates of population growth also meant changes in the distribution of populations among regions. For example, whereas in 1950, the population of Europe had been about 2.5 times as large as Africa's population, currently, the populations of Europe and Africa were about the same size; by 2050, Africa's population would be nearly three times as large as Europe's.

46. Fertility was continuing to decline globally. Worldwide, couples, on average, now had 2.7 children. Some 25 years ago in Kenya, the average had been about 8.5 children per couple; it was now around 4.5. In 61 developed countries and developing countries, fertility levels were below replacement, namely, below roughly two children per

couple. The populations of some 30 countries were projected to decline. Thus, Austria's population was projected to decrease from 8.1 million to 7.1 million by 2050. In contrast, the populations of 31 countries would increase. That of China, for example, would increase from 1.3 billion to 1.5 billion.

47. International migration would continue to have a significant impact on most countries in the coming decades, although the levels and patterns of migration were now better understood and more directly addressed by Governments. With some notable exceptions in some important regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, mortality continued to decline. Lower death rates and longer life expectancies had been observed in the majority of countries. Life expectancy had risen from around 45 years in 1950 to close to 63 years at the present time and infant mortality had declined from 155 deaths per 1,000 births to around 57.

48. The ageing of the world's population – more people attaining ages 80, 90 and even 100 – meant that the world would have a very different social and economic structure. By 2050, for the first time in the history of humanity, there would be more older persons in the world than children.

49. However, there were important exceptions to the general global improvement in mortality. The troubling situation in Eastern Europe, where mortality improvements had been limited or non-existent during the decade, especially among males, should be monitored carefully.

50. Another area of concern was the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where there were more deaths due to AIDS than had earlier been anticipated, with life expectancy dropping substantially and growth rates declining precipitously. Thus, in Botswana, the most affected country, one out of every four adults was infected by HIV. By 2025, its population might be 23 per cent smaller than it would have been in the absence of AIDS. Nevertheless, because of high fertility, Botswana's population was expected to nearly double between 1995 and 2050. In the next two decades, the countries of sub-Saharan Africa would lose over 60 million people due to AIDS.

51. Although the future was uncertain, future population trends were considerably less uncertain than other future developments, such as economic trends or weather forecasts. In the area of population, what was done today would greatly affect what would happen in the coming years and decades. For the past 50 years, the United Nations had had the foresight, courage and leadership to address population issues. It was vital for it to continue to do so.

52. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) wondered why the fertility rate was declining, whether international migration had been factored into the long-term projections for population, whether the projected population growth rates with and without AIDS assumed the absence of advances in science and technology and whether a scientific global study had been carried out on the ideal population carrying capacity of the planet.

53. **Mr. Chamie** (Director of the Population Division) replied that the decline in fertility rates was greatly affected by declines in mortality rates, improved education, especially among women, the changing role of women in society, the increasing availability of modern methods of contraception and a variety of other factors. International migration had been explicitly accounted for in the projections for all the countries. With respect to AIDS, while there were treatments, there were no vaccines currently available and he did not foresee any breakthroughs in that regard in the immediate future. No one was sure about the earth's ideal carrying capacity. That depended on technology, the level of consumption and production and other factors.

Draft resolution on the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/C.2/53/L.19)

54. **Mr. Hidayat** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.19, and drew particular attention to paragraphs 2 and 3.

Agenda item 91: Macroeconomic policy questions (A/53/60, A/53/62, A/53/69, A/53/185, A/53/416, A/53/447 and Corr.1; A/C.2/53/4; A/C.2/53/L.20)

Draft resolution on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence (A/C.2/53/L.20)

55. **Mr. Hidayat** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/53/L.20 and he drew particular attention to paragraphs 11, 13 and 14.

(a) Trade and development (A/53/15 (Parts I, II and III), A/53/72-S/1998/156, A/53/95-S/1998/311, A/53/331, A/53/510)

56. **Mr. Ricupero** (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) stressed the importance of deepening the collaboration between the

representatives of States members at UNCTAD in Geneva and members of the Second Committee in New York. Noting that the tenth session of UNCTAD would be held in Bangkok in early 2000, he said that the symbolic impact of that region, one which had attained strong economic development and was now in the throes of a serious crisis, combined with the dawn of a new century, would give the meeting a special significance. The need for a more comprehensive and integrated vision of development issues was becoming widely accepted. Consideration needed to be given not only to the interrelationships between the various components and determinants of economic development but also to the impact of new technologies, particularly communications technology. In that regard, UNCTAD needed to adapt to changing circumstances and to focus on the needs of developing countries. However, that did not mean that UNCTAD would change its mandate. It would merely refine and redefine aspects of the mandate it had been given by Member States.

57. In order to avoid dispersion and duplication, the integrated approach to development should be combined with a clear sense of priorities. In so doing, a balanced and moderate approach should be taken to development and the false dichotomy between liberalization and regulation, the State and the private sector, should be eschewed. The positions adopted should be even-handed and give due weight to various considerations, including regional differences.

58. It was also imperative that the work of UNCTAD should be geared towards helping developing countries to understand their interests and articulate those interests through forward-looking proposals that could find mutual agreement of benefit to all.

59. The work of UNCTAD on international financial issues stemmed from its role as the focal point, within the United Nations, for the integrated treatment of development and related issues such as trade, finance, technology, investment and sustainable development. The current crisis had graphically demonstrated the strong linkages between finance, trade and investment, and how international financial movements could influence the course and success of national development efforts. Recent forecasts had shown that total flows to emerging markets, which had stood at $300 billion in 1996, were projected to fall to $100 billion in 1999. That would have a profound impact on development prospects, particularly as foreign direct investments in emerging markets were also expected to drop by 17 per cent in 1999.

60. UNCTAD provided a distinct development perspective to discussions on international financial issues and its concern for the development aspect of alternative proposals was unique. The organization had had a long and creditable record of work in that field that included work on international financial and portfolio flows, their relationship with foreign direct investments and their impact on development efforts; trade and financial services, debt issues, notably on debt-management, Paris Club debt negotiations, debt sustainability and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative of the World Bank and IMF.

61. The most recent *Trade and Development Report* drew attention to the fact that although concern had been expressed on the management of the crisis, primary focus should be placed on the prevention of such crises before they arose and on efficient measures to mitigate their propagation. The report contained a number of proposals aimed *inter alia* at increasing the burden sharing of the costs of prevention with the private sector. The measures were designed to strengthen the stability of free markets without requiring explicit financial guarantees. They represented only an initial step towards the adoption of measures to strengthen the financial architecture of the international system in a way that was based on market incentives and that was even-handed in its treatment of borrowers and lenders in both developed and developing countries.

62. After drawing attention to paragraph 12 of agreed conclusions 451 (XLV), adopted by the Trade and Development Board at its forty-fifth session, whereby the Board had expressed its appreciation for the analysis provided in the 1998 *Trade and Development Report* and urged the secretariat to continue to study international trade, monetary and financial issues, he reiterated that UNCTAD was at the disposal of the General Assembly for discussions on financial issues, particularly on development finance.

63. For some time UNCTAD had been offering a distinct perspective on international capital flows. In 1990, the *Trade and Development* report had argued that the ascendancy of finance over industry and the globalization of finance had become an underlying source of instability and unpredictability. Similar concerns had also been raised just before the Mexican peso crisis. Again, in 1996, the *Report* had warned of the dangers and benefits of a heavy reliance on international flows in the fast-growing economies of Asia. Ensuing events had confirmed that ignoring the systemic nature of financial instability was neither responsible nor acceptable.

64. He outlined the three main factors in understanding the current globalized financial system. Firstly, economies that relied too heavily on international markets to finance their current account and fiscal deficits would risk sudden changes in market opinion. That risk applied equally to economies that relied on export earnings from commodities and to those that relied on manufactured goods exports. That was also true of economies that relied on capital inflow. Secondly, fiscal balances had ceased to act as automatic "shock absorbers", and thirdly, with increasingly globalized cross-border financing, sharp shifts in risk and liquidity preference could quickly fuel financial crises. Since the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, such crises had become increasingly common and costly. UNCTAD had estimated the cost of the current Asian crisis at $260 billion.

65. Turning to the least developed countries, he recalled that General Assembly resolution 52/187 had designated UNCTAD as the focal point for the preparation of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The Trade and Development Board had welcomed the generous offer made by the European Union to host the Conference, and had recommended that the General Assembly should accept that offer. The UNCTAD secretariat was pleased by the initiative taken by the European Union, which was a major trading partner of the least developed countries.

66. The comprehensive analysis of development in Africa had been carried out in the 1998 *Trade and Development Report*. The Trade and Development Board had encouraged the continuation of analysis in the context of UNCTAD's contribution to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. Debt overhang, identified as a major constraint facing African countries, had serious adverse consequences for their fiscal health. The Board recommended innovative approaches involving the countries affected, bearing in mind the joint responsibility of debtors and creditors in the accumulation of African debt. Taking into account the proposals contained in the *Report*, the Board urged the international community to consider means of identifying the amount of debt assessed as unpayable for possible action by creditors.

67. UNCTAD had also continued its work in the area of island developing countries in follow-up to the Programme of Action for Small Island Developing States and was pursuing work on behalf of land-locked developing countries and had submitted a report on the transit environment in the land-locked States in Central Asia and their transit developing neighbours to the current General Assembly. In addition, it had focused on helping developing countries build a positive agenda for international trade negotiations and strengthening commercial diplomacy.

68. At its high-level segment in July the Economic and Social Council had addressed a number of elements of relevance to the WTO work programme. UNCTAD had been working with developing countries and experts on trade issues to develop a proactive strategy on issues as diverse as agricultural and services negotiations, electronic commerce, and the long-distance provision of professional services. He was confident that in future, developing countries would be in a better position to participate in conferences.

69. UNCTAD was finalizing plans for a meeting in Lyon, France, in an attempt to integrate the private sector, non-governmental organizations, research centres and universities, among others, into the work of the secretariat. That meeting intended to forge firm partnerships on five key issues: global economic commerce; biotrade, for the benefit of indigenous and local communities; commercial diplomacy; risk management of commodities, and microcredit.

70. He believed that UNCTAD's close collaboration with WTO, and the valuable experience it had gained from working with the Second Committee and the Council had demonstrated its capacity to work constructively with other institutions and to produce sound, balanced analyses and recommendations. UNCTAD wished to remain open to fostering a constructive approach to help developing countries. In his opinion, there was no comparative advantage in the field of ideas; there was however the advantage of offering suggestions that generated real benefit for countries.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.